

21 SEP 1972

A Correspondence with

Alfred W. McCoy

I

On June 1 of this year an official of the US Central Intelligence Agency paid a visit to the New York offices of my publisher, Harper and Row, Inc. This CIA official was Mr. Cord Meyer, Jr. (now the CIA's Assistant Deputy Director of Plans; formerly the CIA official in charge of providing covert financial subsidies for organizations such as the National Student Association, *Encounter* Magazine, and the Congress for Cultural Freedom).¹ Mr. Meyer urged several of his old friends among Harper and Row's senior management to provide him with a copy of the galley proofs of my history of the international narcotics traffic, *The Politics of Heroin in Southeast Asia*. In this book I show the complicity of various US agencies—particularly the CIA and the State Department—in organizing the Southeast Asian drug traffic since the early 1950s.

Mr. Meyer presented one of Harper and Row's senior editors with some documents giving the CIA's view on the Southeast Asian drug traffic. His manner was grave. He said, "You wouldn't want to publish a book that would be full of inaccuracies, embarrass the United States government, or get you involved in libel suits, would you?"

Harper and Row's management promised to consider Mr. Meyer's request and summoned me from Washington, DC, where I was then testifying before the Senate Appropriations Committee on my findings after eighteen months of research into the Southeast Asian drug traffic. This research included more than 250 interviews with heroin dealers, police officials, and intelligence agents in Europe and Asia.

At a meeting in New York on the afternoon of June 8, Harper and Row's president, Mr. Winthrop Knowlton, and its senior vice president, Mr. B. Brooks Thomas, told me that they had decided to provide the CIA with a copy of the galley proofs prior to publication for the following reasons:

First, the CIA would be less likely to seek a temporary court injunction barring publication of the book if the Agency were given a chance to persuade itself that national security was in no way endangered by portions of my book; and secondly, Harper and Row felt that a responsible publisher should have enough confidence in the veracity of any of its particularly controversial books to show them to any reputable critic for comment prior to publication.

At first I disagreed strongly with Harper and Row's decision, arguing that submitting

the galley proofs to the CIA could set a dangerous precedent and ultimately weaken First Amendment guarantees concerning freedom of the press. Moreover, in view of what I had learned of the CIA's operating methods in Southeast Asia I was convinced that the Agency was capable of using unethical means—such as coercing my sources into retracting statements they had made to me about US complicity in the international narcotics traffic—in order to induce Harper and Row to withdraw the book from publication.

After a week of negotiations, however, Harper and Row told me that they would not be willing to publish the book unless I agreed to submit the manuscript to the CIA. Faced with what I believed would be lengthy delays if I took the book to another publisher and the prospect of losing my Harper and Row editor, Elisabeth Jakob, with whom I had worked

closely, I capitulated. Thus began more than two months of lengthy negotiations between the CIA, Harper and Row, and myself. Most of what happened during these elaborate negotiations is in the correspondence reprinted below. I have added introductory notes to explain some of the attending circumstances.

Considered collectively, this exchange of letters provides us with another important reminder—perhaps the first since the National Student Association scandals of 1967—of the contempt this most clandestine of our governmental agencies has for the integrity of the press and publishing industry. As the CIA's letter of July 28, 1972, shows, it was unable to rebut effectively my analysis of its role in the international heroin traffic during the last quarter century. Since the CIA simply had no plausible defense against this charge, it tried to impose prior censorship in order to avoid public scrutiny of its record. If it was not already clear, it now should be obvious to publishers that the Agency cannot be regarded as a responsible critic when its public image is seriously threatened by what is written about it.

II

1 In this letter, written after Cord Meyer, Jr.'s visit, Harper and Row asked the CIA for official confirmation of their interest in seeing the book. Since the CIA had never before been quite so willing to defend itself publicly, neither Harper and Row nor I expected to hear anything more from the Agency.

and Row by stating categorically that it could rebut all my charges about its complicity in the international narcotics traffic. We were surprised, however, that the CIA made no reference to "national security" as one of its concerns in requesting to review the manuscript. Rather, the Agency made its request purely on grounds of government privilege.

Central Intelligence Agency
Washington, D.C. 20505

5 July 1972

Mr. B. Brooks Thomas
Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc.

Dear Mr. Thomas:

Mr. Cord Meyer has asked me to respond to your letter to him of June 30th in connection with the book, *The Politics of Heroin in Southeast Asia*, by Alfred W. McCoy.

As you are no doubt aware, Mr. McCoy testified on 2 June 1972 before the Foreign Operations Subcommittee of the Senate Appropriations Committee. His testimony included allegations concerning support of the international opium traffic by U. S. agencies, including the Central Intelligence Agency, and numerous other allegations concerning participation in the opium traffic by both Americans and local personnel in Southeast Asia.

In the light of the pernicious nature of the drug traffic, allegations concerning involvement of the U. S. Government therein or the participation of American citizens should be made only if based on hard evidence. It is our belief that no reputable

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